



General Assembly

Distr.: General
10 August 2017

Original: English

Seventy-second session

Item 21 of the provisional agenda*

**Implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations
Conferences on Human Settlements and on Housing and
Sustainable Urban Development, and strengthening of the
United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)**

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to paragraph 15 of General Assembly resolution 71/235, provides an overview of the activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) since the issuance of the previous report (A/71/347) in implementing the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and in strengthening UN-Habitat.

The report contains a summary of activities undertaken by UN-Habitat during the reporting period at the global, regional, national and subnational levels, including during the twenty-sixth session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat. It presents an overview of the programme's seven subprogrammes and cross-cutting issues.

The report also provides a description of preparations for and the convening of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), including on the outcomes of Habitat III.

Furthermore, the report presents a number of conclusions and recommendations relating to the New Urban Agenda and the implementation thereof.

* A/72/150.



I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 15 of General Assembly resolution 71/235 on the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), including an overview of preparations for and the convening of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III).

II. Governance of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme: work of the Governing Council and its intersessional and subsidiary bodies

2. The twenty-sixth session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat was held in Nairobi from 8 to 12 May 2017, on the theme, "Opportunities for the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda". The sub-themes were: (a) promoting access to adequate and sustainable housing; (b) integrated human settlements planning for sustainable urbanization; and (c) synergies and financing for sustainable urbanization. That session of the Council, the first following the successful conclusion of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), held in Quito from 17 to 20 October 2016, provided an opportunity to build upon the achievements of Habitat III, by recognizing the key role of national governments at the country level, while highlighting the importance of empowering local governments and other stakeholders to participate in the process.

3. During the session of the Governing Council, UN-Habitat coordinated a series of key knowledge-sharing events, including a session of the dialogue on promoting access to adequate and sustainable housing. Those events contributed to forging broad-based partnerships with the governments of Ethiopia, Germany, Morocco and Singapore to share best practices on affordable housing programmes. Following a high-level meeting of African, Caribbean and Pacific countries on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda through the participatory slum-upgrading programme, which was also held during the session of the Governing Council, 22 new countries sought technical support for participatory slum upgrading.

4. The Governing Council also adopted nine resolutions:

(a) Resolution 26/1: United Nations Human Settlements Programme governance reform and extension of the mandate of the working group on programme and budget;

(b) Resolution 26/2: Enhancing the role of UN-Habitat in urban crisis response;

(c) Resolution 26/3: Revised strategic plan for 2014-2019 and work programme and budget of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme for the biennium 2018-2019;

(d) Resolution 26/4: Promoting safety in cities and human settlements;

(e) Resolution 26/5: Regional technical support on sustainable housing and urban development by regional consultative structures;

(f) Resolution 26/6: World Urban Forum;

(g) Resolution 26/7: Accreditation;

(h) Resolution 26/8: Promoting the effective implementation, follow-up to and review of the New Urban Agenda;

(i) Resolution 26/9: Human settlements development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Working group on programme and budget

5. The working group on programme and budget was established in 2015 through General Assembly resolution 68/239. The working group consists of 15 Member States, with three Member States from each of the five regional groups with the role of chair being rotated among the members of each group. Participation in the meetings of the working group has been, and continues to be, open to all Member States.

6. During the reporting period, the working group held two formal meetings (in October 2016 and February 2017) and three informal meetings (in August and October 2016 and January 2017). The working group has covered topics such as audits and evaluations, financial management, risk management, resource mobilization and regional and national strategies, as well as the business transformation of UN-Habitat.

7. In May 2017, the mandate of the working group was extended for two years by the Governing Council, in its resolution 26/1, adopted at its twenty-sixth session (see above).

III. Update on financial developments

8. Projections for core income for the biennium 2016-2017 stand at \$50.0 million for non-earmarked income and \$320.0 million for earmarked income. As at 31 May 2017, non-earmarked income received and confirmed pledges amounted to \$43.4 million (or 87 per cent of the projection), while \$265.4 million (or 83 per cent of the projection) had been recorded in earmarked income, according to the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS).

9. During the reporting period, UN-Habitat continued to implement a strengthened resource mobilization strategy aimed at widening its donor base to include emerging economy countries and to expand its earmarked project portfolio, including through regional resource mobilization action plans. UN-Habitat continued its participation in the United Nations-wide risk treatment working group focusing on enhancing income from voluntary extrabudgetary contributions.

10. The streamlining of full-cost recovery continued, in line with the principles outlined by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/226, in order to enable more accurate attribution of costs to projects, resulting in a more accurate attribution of \$2.5 million to earmarked projects in 2016, thus reducing the subsidization of earmarked projects by core funds. The streamlining of cost recovery in the enterprise resource planning system, Umoja, and of organizational procedures, is being finalized to ensure that cost recovery is incorporated into the budgets and cost plans of every project.

11. UN-Habitat continued to control core expenditure through a wide range of measures, including the maintenance of low levels of travel costs, the limitation of new recruitment for core-funded posts to critical positions, a closer alignment of expenditure with projected income and a more flexible allocation of staff. Those measures resulted in the reduction of the deficit from \$5.5 million in 2015 to \$2.1 million in 2016.

IV. Activities at the global level

A. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals

12. UN-Habitat continued to participate actively in a number of processes in support of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Acknowledging that it would not be possible to monitor all the cities of every country in its progress towards the Goals and the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, UN-Habitat has focused on developing a “national sample of cities” approach for global monitoring (see para. 55, on the City Prosperity Initiative).

13. UN-Habitat also coordinated the inputs of other United Nations system entities and development partners on the review and refinement of the indicators for Goal 11 and for other Goals with an urban development dimension. Through a global monitoring framework guide for Goal 11, it created a simplified concept for applying the national sample of cities, as well as a work plan and strategy to transform tier III indicators into tier II indicators, as part of the refinement process of indicators as suggested and requested by the Statistical Commission in 2016 (see E/CN.3/2017/2). UN-Habitat also organized an expert group meeting bringing together key experts in solid waste management to discuss and make recommendations for further refinement of indicator 11.6.1 (percentage of urban waste regularly collected and with adequate final discharge). UN-Habitat has coordinated the development of indicators 11.1.1 and 11.c.1, as well as the setting of corresponding national targets. A high-level expert group meeting was held in June 2017 to discuss and refine the scope and definition of the metadata for target 11.1.c.

14. UN-Habitat continued to work with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Meteorological Organization to develop a global framework for monitoring progress on the targets of Goal 6, under the umbrella of UN-Water. In 2014, UN-Habitat, UNEP and WHO, as lead agencies, established the Global Expanded Water Monitoring Initiative, which has developed monitoring methodologies that are currently being piloted in seven proof-of-concept countries: Bangladesh, Fiji, Jordan, the Netherlands, Peru, Senegal and Uganda.

B. World Habitat Day and World Cities Day

15. World Habitat Day 2016 was celebrated on 3 October under the theme “Housing at the centre” and the global celebration was held in Chad. World Cities Day 2016 was celebrated on 31 October 2016, under the theme “Inclusive cities, shared development”. The global observance of World Cities Day was held in Quito, a few days after the conclusion of the Habitat III conference and the adoption of the New Urban Agenda.

C. World Urban Campaign

16. The World Urban Campaign, a global advocacy and partnership platform on sustainable urbanization convened and coordinated by UN-Habitat, is instrumental in promoting urban issues and solutions through multiple networks and constituencies. In advance of Habitat III, the campaign engaged stakeholders through a series of “urban thinkers’ campuses”, guided by a report entitled “The city

we need", a consensus document containing principles, drivers of changes and solutions. Following the first round of campuses, which engaged 7,800 people in 2016, some 22,000 stakeholders will be called upon, from March to December 2017, to start implementing the New Urban Agenda through action-driven commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on Goal 11.

D. Other partnership activities

17. UN-Habitat continued to engage partners in normative, operational and advocacy activities, primarily through multi-stakeholder, issue-based networks and through general and strategic multi-stakeholder partnerships with national governments, local authorities, academia, civil society, the private sector, professionals, grass-roots organizations and women and youth organizations, among others. UN-Habitat also worked in partnership with various UN agencies and intergovernmental bodies at global, regional and local levels.

18. Following the adoption of the New Urban Agenda and its commitment to inclusion, innovation and integration, UN-Habitat established the action framework for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, which outlines the essential components required for effective sustainable urban development. The framework includes 35 key elements, grouped across five categories: (a) national urban policies; (b) urban legislation, rules and regulations; (c) urban planning and design; (d) urban economy and municipal finance; and (e) local implementation. Cutting across all elements are the principles of participation and governance.

19. During the reporting period, UN-Habitat worked closely with local government groups, including the United Cities and Local Governments, in developing a global platform of implementing partners on public space, tools, policy guidance and accompanying regional strategies for the implementation thereof. UN-Habitat strengthened its links with United Cities and Local Governments and its commissions and regional associations in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, North America and the Mediterranean region through capacity-building sessions, workshops and city-to-city exchanges to enhance local governments' management capacities to achieve sustainable development. As an active member of the Development Partners Network on Decentralisation and Local Governance, in 2016, UN-Habitat collaborated with that Working Group on the overarching agenda of localizing the Sustainable Development Goals through the exchange of strategies, technical know-how and new ideas regarding sustainable local development financing, decentralized local governance and urban and territorial governance.

V. Activities at the regional level

A. Cooperation with regional organizations

20. UN-Habitat has strengthened the role of its regional offices as interlocutors of regional and subregional bodies, including support to regional ministerial conferences in Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean, towards the greater regional integration of national urban and housing policies.

21. In Africa, UN-Habitat continued working with the Regional Coordination Mechanism facilitated by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Union, as well as supporting the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Public Service, Local Government, Urban Development and Decentralization (into

which the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development has been integrated).

22. UN-Habitat continued to work closely with national and local authorities and the League of Arab States through its Ministerial Council on Housing and Construction, as well as with other regional networks of partners engaged in urban development to bring peace, safety and prosperity to the Arab States region. The League of Arab States played an active role in the adoption of the "Arab Quito Declaration on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development" at Habitat III. That Declaration emphasized the commitment by Arab countries and governments to addressing sustainable urbanization in the Arab region and the implementation of the New Urban Agenda in the region. Further, the League of Arab States also endorsed a concept proposal, entitled "Towards an Arab urban agenda", as a step by-step implementation guide for the adaptation of the New Urban Agenda in the Arab region.

23. The sixth Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Urban Development held in New Delhi, from 14 to 16 December 2016, was the first major regional meeting following the adoption of the New Urban Agenda. Ministers responsible for housing and urban development in the Asia-Pacific region endorsed the New Delhi Declaration and Implementation Plan, outlining the way forward for countries in the region to implement the New Urban Agenda. The standing working groups on planning, upgrading, basic services, finance and resilience each looked at the scope covered to date and reframed their working programmes in order to better reflect the transformative commitments of the New Urban Agenda.

24. A meeting of the General Assembly of Ministers and High-level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean took place in Buenos Aires, from 21 to 23 June 2017. Discussions at the meeting centred on the action framework for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda as a means to support the intergovernmental dialogue on the New Urban Agenda. In the final declaration, the participants recognized the role and contribution of UN-Habitat in supporting urban development in the region and endorsed the action framework.

B. Regional State of Cities reports

25. The English language version of the *State of European Cities 2016: Cities leading the way to a better future* was launched on 12 October 2016 during the European Week of Regions and Cities, in Brussels, and was presented at Habitat III. The report was prepared jointly by the European Commission and UN-Habitat.

26. UN-Habitat is finalizing the *State of African Cities 2018: The geography of African investment*. The second phase of research for the report has been completed and a compiled draft was discussed during an advisory board meeting held on 17 and 18 May 2017, in Nairobi. The launch of both the English and French versions of the report is envisaged for October 2017.

VI. Thematic activities at the national and subnational levels

A. Urban legislation, land and governance

27. The work of UN-Habitat on matters regarding urban legislation, land and governance supports Member States by providing the foundation necessary for the achievement of sustainable urbanization. Effective local government and land

management in a rules-based system and an environment that is safe for social and economic activity are prerequisites for all other forms of intervention. UN-Habitat continued to participate as a member of the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group, and has initiated a rule of law-based analysis of the urban aspects of the 2030 Agenda and of the New Urban Agenda. The UN-Habitat database of urban law, *Urban Lex*, now contains more than 1,000 legal instruments from more than 60 Member States and its partnership for the comparative analysis of urban law undertook research and training activities in three regions during the reporting period.

28. During the reporting period, UN-Habitat provided technical assistance and training to seven Member States in the preparation, formulation or review of primary and secondary legislation, predominantly aimed at addressing spatial planning and related matters. UN-Habitat has provided training for national and local government officials, United Nations staff and other partners on land-based finance, land readjustment, fit-for-purpose land administration and pro-poor land records in four regions.

29. UN-Habitat has collaborated with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other partners to prevent corruption and increase transparency in urban development through the urban global-local accountability support system initiative (known as Urban GLASS). Eleven local and regional networks signed the "Paris statement" on the occasion of an event to mark International Anti-Corruption Day, held in Paris on 9 December 2016.

30. In order to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11, in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and with support from a broad coalition of partners, UN-Habitat has completed a draft set of guidelines to assist Member States in the implementation of effective crime prevention strategies at the municipal and national levels.

31. As a follow-up to Habitat III, UN-Habitat has convened a global partnership initiative, in the context of the Safer Cities programme, that reviews and supports the implementation of the guidelines on Safer Cities and related initiatives.

B. Urban planning and design

32. In October, 2016, UN-Habitat, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Cities Alliance Initiative launched a global national urban policy programme, a new initiative to support governments in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda through national urban policy. As a sign of its commitment to the programme, the Government of the Republic of Korea pledged to support the development of national urban policies in the three pilot countries (Myanmar, Nigeria and the Islamic Republic of Iran). The national urban policy process is at the initial phase in several countries in collaboration with national authorities (Argentina, Cuba, Jordan, Lebanon, Liberia, Morocco, the Sudan and Tunisia,) and is ongoing in Angola, Cameroon, Egypt and Zambia. National urban policies are being drafted in Liberia and the Philippines, while capacity is being developed in Chad, Ghana and Iraq. Colombia, Mozambique and South Africa have adopted spatial frameworks at the metropolitan level.

33. The Second International Conference on National Urban Policy was co-hosted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and UN-Habitat in Paris, from 15 to 18 May 2017. The Conference reviewed progress made on developing and implementing national urban policies to support the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, attracting more than 350 participants from over 30 international organizations, 14 ministers,

9 mayors and regional representatives, including 141 speakers and representatives from more than 80 countries. In addition, UN-Habitat has already been supporting the preparation of an assessment report on national urban policies in five Arab States (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and the Sudan), to be released in 2017.

34. Another initiative launched since Habitat III is the urban-rural linkages network. The network was created to focus on advocacy and information-sharing and support national and local governments in elaborating guidelines and tools for strengthening urban-rural linkages and integrated territorial development, as well as to provide a platform for peer-to-peer learning. Institutions that have shown interest in participating in the initiative include the Cities Alliance Initiative, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the International Institute for Environment and Development and United Cities and Local Governments.

35. The process relating to the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning, approved by the Governing Council of UN-Habitat in 2015, was bolstered in October 2016 by the announcement by Japan of an international platform to support the guidelines and share related knowledge. The Government of Japan is to host the first international symposium on urban and territorial planning in the city of Fukuoka, in October 2018.

36. The Urban Planning and Design Lab project, established in 2014 to promptly respond to the requests of national and local governments with concrete and implementable planning proposals, has continued its activities. UN-Habitat supports 39 cities in their sustainable urban planning efforts and some 14 local urban planning and design labs have been set up worldwide. During the reporting period, the Lab organized four expert group meetings on topics including urban infill and densification, methods for urban labs and large-scale urban transformation. In October 2016, the Lab presented a publication on its experience and methodology, entitled "Urban Planning and Design Labs: tools for integrated and participatory urban planning", which will serve as a reference for the global network of urban planning and design labs.

37. Separately, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and under the overall coordination of the humanitarian response in Kenya, UN-Habitat finalized the spatial planning component of the new settlement supporting the integration of over 60,000 refugees and the host community in Kalobeyei (Turkana County, Kenya).

38. UN-Habitat continued to implement its global public space programme, launching a tool for the city-wide assessment of open public spaces, designed to provide local governments with information on the quality and quantity of public spaces in their territory. This is in line with target 11.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, in support the development of city-wide strategies to expand safe, accessible and inclusive green and public spaces for all. In collaboration with the Asia-Pacific section of United Cities and Local Governments, a policy guideline on public spaces to help city leaders integrate public space in sustainable urban development was launched. Initiatives on public space were completed in nine cities: Jeevanje Gardens (Nairobi); Dey Pukhu (Kirtipur, Nepal); Lotus Garden (Mumbai, India); Place de la Paix (Haiti); Medellin (Colombia); Buenos Aires; Quito; and Surabaya and Sidoarjo (Indonesia). China and the Russian Federation are embarking on national public space programmes and a regional strategy on public space has been developed for the Arab States.

C. Urban economy and municipal finance

39. UN-Habitat has provided advisory and capacity-building support to urban authorities to improve their revenue-generating capacity. In Somalia, improved financial management systems were established in 15 districts. An automated municipal finance management system introduced in the district authorities contributed to improving municipal revenue generation, transparency, accountability and financial management procedures. In Afghanistan, improved methods of land surveying and registration, and tax invoicing and collection, have resulted in a 15 per cent increase in revenue in Herat, Mazar-e Sharif, Jalalabad and Kandahar. In Kenya, a revenue enhancement project in Kiambu County has laid the foundation for improving its municipal finance and fostering inclusive economic development. In addition, the government of Homa Bay County in Kenya, and the municipalities of Croix-des-Bouquets, Cabaret and Thomazeau, in Haiti, have been provided with advisory and technical support to improve their revenue-generating capacity.

40. The capacity of partner cities to adopt urban strategies supportive of inclusive economic growth was also enhanced during the reporting period. The cities of Bogota; Silay City and Cagayan de Oro, the Philippines; Akure, Nigeria; Kisumu, Kalobeyei Ward in Turkana West Sub-County, Homabay County and Kiambu County, Kenya; Al 'Alamayn, Egypt; Croix-des-Bouquets, Cabaret and Thomazeau municipalities, Haiti; and Nampula, Mozambique, provided mutual assistance, through partnerships, in preparing local economic development plans based on local economy assessments.

D. Housing and slum upgrading

41. During the reporting period, UN-Habitat continued to play a leading role in leveraging political commitment towards promoting access to adequate housing and strengthening the normative framework for housing policy formulation and implementation. This has contributed toward the necessary conditions for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 11 and the New Urban Agenda.

42. Under the Global Housing Strategy, UN-Habitat continued supporting Governments through the provision of policy advice and technical assistance to formulate and implement policies for the supply of adequate, affordable and sustainable housing. In Myanmar, UN-Habitat assisted in the elaboration of a national housing strategy, the first since the 2015 national elections. In Sri Lanka, a new national housing policy was submitted for approval by the government, with support from UN-Habitat. In Afghanistan, a national housing profile was launched, the first comprehensive assessment of Afghanistan's housing sector, providing an evidence base for the formulation of Afghanistan's first housing policy and national housing programme. In Mozambique, a national housing strategy has been elaborated and a request has been made for UN-Habitat to continue assisting in the elaboration of a national housing profile. In Zambia, following the approval of a national housing policy, an implementation strategy has been formulated and aligned with the priorities of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda. UN-Habitat is also supporting the Government of India in formulating a new national urban housing and habitat policy.

43. Through the participatory slum-upgrading programme, UN-Habitat conducted a joint workshop with the secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific States in order to sensitize 79 Member States regarding the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, in particular its focus on reducing urban inequalities and fostering gender equality, human health and well-being, as well as more resilience and the

contributions of more inclusive and sustainable economic growth for ending urban poverty. The workshop was hosted by the secretariat in Brussels.

44. During the reporting period, UN-Habitat started its work on a new project on pro-poor planning of climate resilience in marginalized neighbourhoods, in Montego Bay, Jamaica and Bamenda, Cameroon. Those two cities identified several challenges related to climate resilience building in their citywide slum-upgrading strategies. Activities undertaken with the local government and communities started by identifying climate hot spots and strategic interventions for slums that will now be prepared for upgrading.

45. UN-Habitat continued its provision of support to national governments in promoting affordable and sustainable housing practices through knowledge generation and the development of technical tools for green buildings. In a report entitled "Building sustainability assessment and benchmarking: an introduction", UN-Habitat has identified opportunities for and barriers to building sustainability assessment and benchmarking schemes, as a contribution towards implementing and monitoring the New Urban Agenda. In addition, in the framework of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns and its subprogramme on sustainable buildings and construction, and in collaboration with a large number of international partners, UN-Habitat launched the beta version of the sustainable housing design tool, known as SHERPA, which aims to establish global guidelines and standards for green buildings.

E. Urban basic services

46. UN-Habitat joined the Transformative Urban Mobility Initiative, launched at Habitat III by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development. The Initiative is aimed at providing the framework for more joint efforts towards sustainable mobility and envisions investments of up to 1.2 billion euro to be mobilized for urban mobility infrastructure and pilot projects, as well as capacity-building for urban leaders. Following the establishment of that collaborative effort, UN-Habitat has been working with the Ministry on capacity-building initiatives to promote sustainable urban mobility.

47. UN-Habitat contributed to the preparations for the first Global Conference on Sustainable Transport, which was held in Ashgabat, on 26 and 27 November 2016, notably through the preparation of a concept paper that highlighted the urban mobility aspects of the New Urban Agenda. In addition, as regards road transport, in collaboration with the International Road Transport Union, a high-level group to devise a road map was launched at a workshop held in the United Nations Office at Nairobi, on 24 November 2016. The high-level group is tasked with devising a road map for boosting collective passenger transport in East African cities.

48. At the Habitat III Conference, UN-Habitat established an Urban Waters Hub together with the Global Water Partnership, International Water Management Institute, World Water Council, International Water Association, Stockholm International Water Institute, Akvo and the University of South Florida. The Hub is a network of partners with a common objective of improving urban water management aspects, as part of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. In addition, UN-Habitat continued to co-chair the Global Wastewater Initiative, a voluntary multi-stakeholder platform comprising United Nations entities, international organizations, Governments, scientists and the private sector. Its aim is to facilitate coordinated action to tackle the wastewater challenge and promote the wastewater agenda.

49. UN-Habitat showcased its achievements in waste management at the sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development held in Nairobi, in August 2016. As part of the Conference, UN-Habitat co-organized a seminar on waste management in Africa with the Ministry of the Environment of Japan, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, UNEP, the United Nations Office for Project Services and Nairobi City County. As a follow-up to the joint seminar on waste management held during the conference, UN-Habitat partnered with the Ministry of the Environment of Japan, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and UNEP to establish the African Clean Cities Platform, which has the following objectives: (a) knowledge-sharing and networking; (b) the promotion of efforts towards the Sustainable Development Goal targets on waste management; and (c) the promotion of investment in waste management in Africa.

F. Risk reduction and rehabilitation

50. The urban resilience programme of UN-Habitat provided capacity development tools and generated evidence-based and practical guidance for action on urban resilience as part of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the urban dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals. In May 2017, during the Summit of Local and Regional Governments, within the framework of the Fifth Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, UN-Habitat launched a city resilience profiling tool. The tool forms part of a unique methodology that provides the framework and process steps needed to diagnose the level of urban resilience in a given city and to generate actions for resilience in the form of recommendations and plans for cities to follow, while supporting the implementation thereof at the local level.

51. Through the city resilience profiling programme, UN-Habitat partnered with a number of local and regional governments in supporting their development of strategic resilience plans. In 2016, the cities of Asunción, Maputo, and Yakutsk (Russian Federation) all began development of their resilience plans, for implementation in 2017-2018.

52. In 2017, the Global Alliance for Urban Crises secretariat, hosted by UN-Habitat, was established. The Alliance is a broad-based partnership including both United Nations and non-United Nations entities in support of the urban resilience programme. The Alliance responds to humanitarian crises in cities by building linkages between humanitarian and development actors and deploying urban planners at the very beginning of crisis response.

53. In March 2017, UN-Habitat published *Trends in Urban Resilience 2017*. As one of the first publications to take stock of urban resilience efforts globally under the framework of five major intergovernmental agendas — the New Urban Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change — while also addressing the conclusions of the World Humanitarian Summit, it allows readers to track trends in urban resilience that can potentially help bring together the development and humanitarian domains by showing commonalities and taking stock of the gaps.

G. Research and capacity development

54. During the reporting period, UN-Habitat, in close cooperation with various United Nations entities (UNESCO, WHO, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), UNEP and the United Nations Development Programme), prepared a global monitoring framework for the urban components of the 2030 Agenda, in order to assist countries and cities in defining national targets, including specific benchmarks and standards for the implementation of the Goals, in particular Goal 11.

55. One of the primary tools of that framework, known as the City Prosperity Initiative, provides a single platform for monitoring progress in the achievement of the Goals and the New Urban Agenda, thus eliminating potential duplication. Its composite index, covering six dimensions, serves to define targets and goals to support the formulation of evidence-based policies, including the definition of measurable, long-term plans. Seven expert group meetings were organized in key urban thematic areas, to bring together various partners, including universities, research centres, the private sector and non-governmental organizations, in working towards the refinement of techniques, approaches and metrics for data collection and analysis and use of information, particularly for those with a spatial component. The Initiative has been applied in more than 400 cities, in countries as diverse as China, Colombia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mexico and Saudi Arabia.

56. Separately, UN-Habitat has created and proposed a United Nations system-wide method for monitoring and reporting on urban indicators using a unified national sample of cities, aimed at enabling countries to aggregate values at the national level to ensure consistency in the analysis, comparability in results, the proper evaluation of progress, uniformity in reporting and stronger links to national policies, using the same set of cities over time. The method of aggregation is being tested in Botswana, Colombia, Mexico and Tunisia, using a seed grant received from United Nations central funds. Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Swaziland and Zambia have expressed interest in adopting that working method.

57. In close collaboration with New York University and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, UN-Habitat has produced a global sample of cities to illustrate global aggregates of selected indicators, which assist in the monitoring and reporting of the 2030 Agenda. The global sample was instrumental in the preparation of data for the 2016 and 2017 reports of the Secretary-General on the Sustainable Development Goals.

58. UN-Habitat continued to design capacity-building programmes to support the implementation and monitoring of and reporting on the work towards the Goals and the New Urban Agenda. Specific tools and guidelines are being created, while training courses, in the form of knowledge exchange workshops, peer-to-peer learning and tailor-made workshops, are organized in close collaboration with the regional commissions (ECA, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) and associations of cities.

H. Cross-cutting issues

59. UN-Habitat has identified four cross-cutting issues to be mainstreamed in its operational and normative work: gender equality, climate change, youth and human rights. For each issue, a project formulation marker has been developed, in order to

assess mainstreaming at the inception stage of project development. The system of markers works to ensure that the issues are all mainstreamed throughout the programmes and projects of UN-Habitat. The respective teams for each of those four issues engage in joint project review, capacity-building, knowledge management and reporting.

1. Gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women

60. In December 2016, UN-Habitat began the process of gender resource expense tracking, as part of meeting the requirements of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. For 2016, UN-Habitat project funds directed towards projects centred on gender equality and the empowerment of women amounted to \$219,884.

61. UN-Habitat, with the Habitat III secretariat, hosted a cross-cutting expert group meeting, after the conference, on the theme of "Engendering national urban policies for successful implementation of the New Urban Agenda." The meeting produced a strong dialogue on the importance of gender-responsive national urban policies and will produce a publication on how to use such policies to empower women. At the twenty-sixth session of its Governing Council, in May 2017, UN-Habitat hosted a gender forum, which brought together diverse groups of women to discuss urban issues and raise awareness of the distinct challenges that women face in cities.

62. UN-Habitat has also developed a gender lens as part of its city resilience profiling programme. Applying that lens ensures that the resilience profiling of cities is gender-sensitive and takes into account the unique impact that disasters have on women and girls, and how local and national authorities can best respond thereto.

63. In terms of its internal programming, in 2016, UN-Habitat strengthened its integration of climate change through the systematic review and scoring of proposed project documents and concept notes according to a climate change marker. In December 2016, UN-Habitat adopted a new environmental and social safeguards system, which will equally be applied to all UN-Habitat programmes and projects.

2. Climate change

64. The New Urban Agenda includes over 20 calls to address climate change in urban areas. A complementary policy note and thematic guide on addressing climate change in national urban policy offers policymakers 16 recommendations for ensuring that urban policies empower local authorities to take climate action.

65. By the end of 2016, the number of mayors committed to taking climate action under the Compact of Mayors had grown from 320 (at the end of 2015) to 605, representing roughly 446 million inhabitants. Following a merger of the Compact of Mayors with the European Commission's Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, the new Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy was launched on 1 January 2017. UN-Habitat has a seat on the Founders' Council of that group. Meanwhile UN-Habitat is assisting two cities (Nacala, Mozambique, and Moroni), whose mayors announced their intentions to comply with the Compact, in meeting their commitments.

66. UN-Habitat supported the Government of Belize and Belmopan City Council in developing a new climate-proof master plan for the city. In the Canaan/Onaville resettlement site in Haiti, UN-Habitat has not only provided comprehensive urban planning support but also contributed concrete plans for adapting to climate change through flood reduction measures, which are already partly being implemented

through infrastructure works funded by the United States Agency for International Development.

67. The first UN-Habitat project funded by the Adaptation Fund was launched in Lao People's Democratic Republic. The project will strengthen climate resilience in scores of villages in one of the poorest and most vulnerable parts of the country. As at the end of 2016, the Adaptation Fund had approved concept proposals for Fiji and the Solomon Islands, and pre-concept notes for southern Africa (Comoros, Madagascar, Malawi and Mozambique).

3. Youth

68. Considerable progress has been made towards improving the capacity of partner cities to adopt urban policies and programmes that are supportive of increased employment, livelihoods and opportunities for youth, women and disadvantaged groups.

69. Building from its initial base of four centres in East Africa, the "One stop youth resources centre" model has been scaled up and deepened in a number of areas, including in Rwanda. The centres exist in urban centres to allow young people to be trained in information and communications technology, entrepreneurship, business incubation skills and employment generation. The centres also strengthen the capacity of cities to engage youth in local decision-making and city development strategies. New post-conflict centres have been established in Mogadishu and the Mathare slum in Nairobi. The "One stop" centres serve as a model on how to create public space in urban slums.

70. The "Innovate Africa" programme has been developed with Ericsson and Samsung and local governments in Kenya. The "Innovate Kenya" programme, part of the overall programme, promotes the development of urban innovation and solutions by Kenyan youth through an innovation process that solves local government issues related to public transport, space and housing. Through the programme, youth worked with Kiambu County government in Kenya to develop a web and mobile, known as Mat Q, for automating the management of matatu (local bus) terminals. The application has improved efficiency for the drivers and revenue collection for the county government. The programme is now into its second phase, engaging three local governments in Kenya.

4. Human rights

71. The New Urban Agenda uses strong rights-based language and focuses on the need to promote cities that benefit all, with women, youth and people with disabilities highlighted, in particular, as priority groups. UN-Habitat also promoted the 2030 Agenda principle of leaving no one behind through its work, towards the achievement of Goals 5, 10 and 11.

72. Human rights mainstreaming activities focused on the capacity-building of staff and partners to use the human rights-based approach in project formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, in order to strengthen the effective integration of human rights into the UN-Habitat project cycle and spur the development of tools that guide a human rights-based approach in all UN-Habitat activities. In the framework of the Global Housing Strategy and the participatory slum upgrading programme, UN-Habitat provided technical assistance on implementing a human rights-based approach to partners in Afghanistan, Mozambique, Cameroon, Zambia, Ghana, Guyana, Sri Lanka and Myanmar.

73. UN-Habitat strengthened its partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, under the framework of the "Mediterranean City-

to-City Migration Project", co-led by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and United Cities and Local Governments, with UNHCR as an associate partner, focused on strengthening migration governance in the Mediterranean region. Three pilot projects are currently being implemented with the municipalities of Amman, Beirut and Tunis, to support partner Southern Mediterranean cities in taking concrete actions towards improved migration governance.

74. During the reporting period, UN-Habitat continued the work of the United Nations Housing Rights Programme in partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The programme focuses on assisting States and other stakeholders with the implementation of their commitments under the Habitat Agenda to ensure the full and progressive realization of the right to adequate housing. A joint publication was produced that demonstrated best practices in relocation, provided alternatives to forced evictions and guidelines for eviction impact assessments before, during and after evictions.

75. UN-Habitat continued its partnership and collaboration with the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in exploring the advances and challenges faced by indigenous peoples. At a workshop held in Nairobi, UN-Habitat advocated for national and local decision makers to ensure that indigenous communities' rights are taken into account for the development of policies and programmes. UN-Habitat continued assisting national and local governments in adopting and enforcing non-discriminatory policies in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, so as to ensure the collection of data disaggregated by disability for proper evidence-based policies and programmes, facilitate access to economic resources and opportunities and encourage the adoption of adequate building codes.

VII. United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development

76. The New Urban Agenda was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), held in Quito, in October 2016. In September 2016, Member States had agreed on the draft outcome document, during the final intergovernmental, informal negotiations held in New York, after the third session of the Preparatory Committee, which was held in Surabaya, Indonesia, from 25 to 27 July 2016.

77. The agreement on the draft outcome document, one month before its adoption at the Conference, allowed the more than 30,000 participants and 167 country delegations at Habitat III to start focusing on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The Conference provided a space and opportunities to create new pathways in response to the challenges of urbanization and the opportunities it offers for the implementation of sustainable urban development.

78. After the conclusion of the Conference, all Member States endorsed the New Urban Agenda and committed to work together towards a paradigm shift in the way that cities are planned, built and managed, by adopting a resolution thereon during the seventy-first session of General Assembly, in December 2016 (resolution 71/256). Subsequent to its adoption and endorsement, the implementation of the New Urban Agenda is now crucial for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its Goals and the Paris Agreement, as well as other global frameworks.

79. The preparatory process for Habitat III followed an innovative and inclusive approach, focusing not only on the outcome of the Conference but, more

importantly, on the process and the legacy of the Conference. A number of initiatives launched during that process, at the Conference itself and as the legacy demonstrate the innovative and inclusive nature of Habitat III.

A. Conference of 30,000 voices

80. Habitat III had the largest participation of civil society, stakeholders and local authorities in the history of United Nations conferences. That success was based on an inclusive and participatory preparatory process, over two years, and a similar approach will be necessary to work towards sustainable urbanization, which can only be reached if citizens and all levels of government are part of the New Urban Agenda and its implementation. That level of engagement was seen throughout the Conference, with over 30,000 representatives and individuals, where the aim was to create a space that allowed new partnerships, alliances, networks, synergies and cooperation for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

81. The Conference comprised a large number of meetings and events: eight plenary meetings; six high-level round tables; four assemblies; 16 stakeholder round tables; 10 policy dialogues; 22 special sessions; three urban talks; one urban journalism academy; 59 United Nations events; 14 talks with the United Nations; 15 United Nations exhibitions; 42 Habitat III Village projects; 218 side events; 114 networking events; 18 training events and 29 parallel events. As part of the Conference, there were also 144 exhibition booths, with a cumulative attendance of 50,588 participants.

82. The General Assembly of Partners for Habitat III convened more than 1,100 individual organizations, with connections to over 58,000 networks, as part of the work on sustainable urban development during the Habitat III preparatory process and the Conference itself. The 16 Partner Constituent Groups of the General Assembly of Partners collaborated on and proposed speakers and content for the 16 stakeholder round tables that took place at the Conference.

83. During the Conference, 16 seats were allocated to the stakeholders in the plenaries and high-level round tables, so as to enable equal representation of each of the Partner Constituent Groups of the General Assembly of Partners. The participation of the Partner Constituent Groups representing older persons and persons with disabilities was also a landmark achievement of the Habitat III process.

B. Regional, subnational and local government presence

84. Habitat III promised to bring together Member States and a diversity of urban actors, particularly local authorities, with a goal of generating and mobilizing support for the New Urban Agenda. It was also an opportunity to strengthen the partnerships between the United Nations and the regional, subnational and local governments. The full involvement of subnational, local and regional authorities as policy developers, and not simply as implementers, enabled the creation of an inclusive Habitat III Agenda, and will be vital for the achievement of sustainable urban development in the future.

85. The Second World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments was attended by roughly 2,000 participants, representing different global networks of local and regional governments. Local and subnational leaders made statements on their shared commitments to carry forward the ideas and principles of the New Urban Agenda, while localizing and monitoring its progress on an ongoing basis.

The shared statement also conveyed the intention of setting the expectation that the New Urban Agenda would mark a new era of engagement between global processes and local and regional governments.

86. In addition, Habitat III partnered with the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments as a coordination mechanism that brought together the major international networks of local governments to undertake joint advocacy relating to international policy processes, particularly the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Goals and the New Urban Agenda.

87. As an organized and consolidated constituency that had been collaborating through joint advocacy to ensure local decision-makers were included in other processes, the Global Taskforce was engaged with the negotiation of the New Urban Agenda from the beginning of the Habitat III process.

C. Unprecedented inter-agency engagement

88. Habitat III offered a unique opportunity for the United Nations system to meet with government representatives, mayors, local leaders and a range of urban stakeholders all over the world to discuss the challenge of how cities and towns can be better planned and managed, and how all stakeholders could fulfil their role as drivers of sustainable development. A United Nations task team on Habitat III was established to mobilize the United Nations system as a whole within the work of the preparatory process, and played a prominent role as an inter-agency task force that cooperated on the preparatory process for the Conference.

89. The Conference maximized participation of all stakeholders and focused on implementation of the principles, policies and actions for sustainable urban development, including through a "One United Nations" pavilion, to showcase and enable collaboration among entities of the United Nations and to highlight different United Nations entities' innovations and integrate them into the narrative of the New Urban Agenda. The pavilion provided a space dedicated to the United Nations system and its activities regarding sustainable urban development, with the organization of 59 events by 35 different United Nations system entities, as well as 15 exhibitions and 14 networking meetings. Those events highlighted key elements needed for the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda, showcasing the perspectives of the different United Nations system entities.

D. Advocacy and outreach relating to Habitat III and the New Urban Agenda

90. The outreach and advocacy mechanisms relating to Habitat III aimed to keep relevant identified audiences informed of the identity and purpose of the Conference, of the compelling need for the New Urban Agenda and, ultimately, of the call to action for those audiences to engage in the process leading to the formulation of the New Urban Agenda and to participate in the Conference. All official documents, reports and publications were translated into the six official languages of the United Nations.

91. During the whole process relating to Habitat III, a series of events, such as national urban forums, urban breakfasts, urban walks and urban journalism academies, were organized.

92. After the Conference, a total of 18 national urban forums were convened, in collaboration with partners, in 2017. A total of 51 urban breakfasts were organized in the run-up to the Conference, with an average of 70 representatives attending

each one, resulting in an approximate total of 3,570 people attending an urban breakfast during the Habitat III process.

93. The Habitat III urban walks took place before and after the intergovernmental negotiations and informal hearings, in several cities of the world, to showcase examples of positive urban design, planning and governance, in those cities, as well as related challenges, to an audience involved in the Habitat III process, in order to bring successful planning tools to their attention and to spark discussion on urban planning and the challenges of sustainable urban development.

94. The urban journalism academy was an innovative initiative to train journalists and media professionals interested or involved in urban development with reference to the social and economic issues facing cities in the twenty-first century. The series started in 2014, as a follow-up to the process of elaborating the New Urban Agenda. From 2014 to 2016, over 24 academies were held all over the world and more than 1,000 journalists and 137 speakers were trained in 21 cities.

E. Legacy of the Conference

95. As part of the legacy of and follow-up to Habitat III, the Conference secretariat has continued to work with such partners as Member States, stakeholders in the General Assembly of Partners and the United Nations system, by coordinating several activities and meetings related to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Such activities have included: cross-cutting expert group meetings with stakeholders and the United Nations task team on Habitat III, national urban forums and urban breakfasts.

96. The New Urban Agenda has also been translated into several languages, apart from the six official languages of the United Nations, such as Albanian, Czech, German, Indonesian, Malaysian and Portuguese. Braille and audio versions will also be available, so as to ensure access for all persons to the text.

97. A global report on Habitat III would collect all the information on the Conference, its legacy and the preparatory process.

F. Independent assessment of UN-Habitat

98. As part of the follow-up to and review of the outcome of Habitat III, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of UN-Habitat, Member States requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly during its seventy-first session an evidence-based and independent assessment of UN-Habitat. The result of the assessment will be a report containing recommendations to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and oversight of UN-Habitat, to analyse: (a) the normative and operational mandate of UN-Habitat; (b) the governance structure of UN-Habitat, for more effective, accountable and transparent decision-making; (c) the work of UN-Habitat with national, subnational and local governments and with relevant stakeholders in order to harness the full potential of partnerships; and (d) the financial capability of UN-Habitat. The report of the High-level Independent Panel to Assess and Enhance the Effectiveness of UN-Habitat (A/71/1006) will be presented to the General Assembly at a two-day high-level meeting, convened by the President of the General Assembly, to be held on 5 and 6 September 2017, in New York.

VIII. Conclusions and recommendations

99. In the light of the New Urban Agenda, Member States are encouraged to:

(a) Provide UN-Habitat with strong political support, including financial support, to ensure coherence and collaboration on urban issues across the United Nations system;

(b) Support UN-Habitat as a focal point for sustainable urbanization and human settlements development, including in the implementation, follow-up to and review of the New Urban Agenda, in collaboration with other United Nations system entities;

(c) Incorporate a robust implementation, coordination and monitoring mechanism with inbuilt evaluation for the New Urban Agenda that would bring opportunities and assist Member States in meeting the challenges of urbanization and poverty;

(d) Ensure that the innovative and inclusive approach of the Habitat III preparatory process and the Conference itself is kept in the report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, coordinated by UN-Habitat, opening spaces to stakeholders who were involved in and contributed to the New Urban Agenda, based on the legacy of those platforms and mechanisms;

(e) Continue to build partnerships with relevant partners, such as subnational and local governments, to strengthen their effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

**General Assembly
Security Council**Distr.: General
10 August 2017

Original: English

**General Assembly
Seventy-second session
Item 39 of the provisional agenda*
The situation in Afghanistan****Security Council
Seventy-second year****Special report on the strategic review of the United Nations
Assistance Mission in Afghanistan****Report of the Secretary-General****I. Introduction**

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 7 of Security Council resolution 2344 (2017), in which the Council requested me to conduct a strategic review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) with the goal of assessing the Mission's efficiency and effectiveness in order to optimize the division of labour to ensure better cooperation between United Nations-related organizations. It comprises the findings of the strategic review and my recommendations concerning the mandated tasks, priorities and configuration of UNAMA on the basis of an in-depth review of the Mission.

2. The strategic review team, led by my Special Representative for Iraq, met a wide range of stakeholders in Afghanistan and New York in May and early June 2017, including the President, the Chief Executive, Cabinet members, key members of parliament and political parties, civil society organizations, women's groups and representatives of the diplomatic and donor community, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and non-governmental organizations. The review also considered the comprehensive review conducted in 2012 (see A/66/728-S/2012/133), internal assessments in the intervening years and the final report of the Tripartite Review Commission on the United Nations in Afghanistan, submitted to the Security Council in September 2015 (see S/2015/713). Lastly, the present report was informed by my own visit to Kabul on 14 June 2017, where I met with the President of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani, and the Chief Executive, Abdullah Abdullah, as well as the UNAMA senior leadership and Afghans displaced by conflict.

3. The recommendations arising from the strategic review are calibrated to prepare the United Nations engagement until the end of 2020, the same time frame as for commitments to financial and military assistance made at the summits held in 2016 in Brussels and Warsaw, thereby contributing to a coherent international engagement in Afghanistan. I should note that while the recommendations are

* A/72/150.



specific to Afghanistan and were formulated following an in-depth review of the situation and the role of UNAMA, they are consistent with my broader vision for the United Nations in the current global context. In particular, they emphasize the priority of conflict prevention and sustaining peace, on the basis of an expansive understanding of peacebuilding that stresses the political factors but incorporates economic, social and institutional factors. They are also consistent with the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (see A/70/95-S/2015/446) and the subsequent implementation report of my predecessor (A/70/357-S/2015/682), which stressed unity of effort across the United Nations family, and with my own determination that the United Nations as a system deliver for Member States in a more coherent and effective way.

II. Background

4. Since the establishment of UNAMA in 2002, the Mission's role has been defined by its support for the transition process outlined in the Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions, signed in Bonn, Germany, in December 2001, also referred to as the Bonn Agreement. The implementation of the Agreement was premised on the transition to a post-conflict environment, with an armed opposition acting against rather than as a serious hindrance to the achievement of peace and prosperity. In subsequent years, the adoption of a constitution, expanded protection for human rights and civil liberties, democratic elections for the President and parliament and the establishment and growing effectiveness of government and State institutions have been seen. All of those processes were closely supported by UNAMA. Despite progress in those areas, the Taliban-led insurgency began to gain ground, particularly after 2006. Against that backdrop, Afghanistan entered a new phase in 2014 with the peaceful transition from one elected President to another and the transfer of security responsibilities from the International Security Assistance Force, led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces.

5. The role of UNAMA evolved as the situation in Afghanistan changed, and the Mission's mandate and scope of activities expanded. Following a phase of expansion, the Mission's strength has been contracting since 2011. In recognition of the sovereignty of Afghanistan and as Afghan State institutions continued to gain capacity, UNAMA increasingly played a supporting role in alignment with the priorities of State institutions. However, real and meaningful progress notwithstanding, the Afghan State currently continues to rely heavily on the international community, both financially and in terms of security support. More than 60 per cent of the Government's budget is financed by foreign donors, and despite immense resources spent on institution-building, at moments of crisis Afghan institutions are at times perceived to be insufficiently effective at mediating between powerful interests and factions that retain autonomous capacities for violence.

6. These internal political rivalries take place in a context in which the legitimacy of the State is contested by the Taliban insurgency. During the early years of the implementation of the Bonn Agreement, it was predicted that the insurgency could be contained or diminished. Subsequent developments proved contrary to that assumption. A political settlement is therefore required. Efforts to begin negotiations towards that end have been made over the past few years, but so far have gained little traction.

7. It is this overall environment — defined by a fragile political consensus among those who recognize the constitutional order and an increasingly violent and sustained insurgency by those who reject that order — in which the United Nations is now operating. Doing so demands a reorientation of its activities. I strongly recommend that the ultimate goal of the Mission over the next several years be to support all efforts to reach sustainable peace and self-reliance in Afghanistan.

8. The strategic review analysed the context and made recommendations on how UNAMA and the wider United Nations system should respond to it in pursuit of the overarching goal: a stable and prosperous Afghanistan with good neighbourly relations, where human rights are upheld and basic services are available to all.

III. Main findings of the strategic review

9. The key observation regarding the current situation in Afghanistan that guides all subsequent recommendations is that Afghanistan is not in a post-conflict situation, where sufficient stability exists to focus on institution-building and development-oriented activities, but a country undergoing a conflict that shows few signs of abating. That is not to say that progress has not occurred, only that it continues to be challenged by the effects of the ongoing conflict, which also threatens the sustainability of the achievements. It is important to underline that institution-building and development can still occur in a conflict, but the United Nations focus must now be as outlined in subsequent sections of the present report.

10. Afghanistan continues to face significant political, security, socioeconomic, humanitarian and human rights challenges. While macroeconomic indicators have improved, including revenue collection, poverty among the rural and urban population has increased. High population growth and accelerated urbanization have created a bulge of mostly urban, unemployed and alienated youth and with it a potential breeding ground for radicalization. Several social indicators remain unsatisfactory, including rising unemployment and uneven access to primary education, health services and justice. The population in need of humanitarian assistance has increased. Significant progress has been made in promoting women's rights and participation, but women in Afghanistan remain unequal partners in the country's political, social and economic spheres. Corruption is widely regarded as a key factor that continues to undermine public trust and confidence in State institutions and thereby further fuels conflict. Improved accountability and good governance, on the other hand, would contribute to stability and peacebuilding.

11. A major achievement of the early implementation of the Bonn process was the agreement on a forward-looking constitution for Afghanistan and the holding of elections to legitimize executive and legislative authority. Despite an erosion in confidence owing to widespread allegations of fraud in previous elections, there remains among Afghan people today a strong aspiration to have the constitutional order observed. For the purposes of domestic political cohesion, it is important that parliamentary elections be held as scheduled in 2018 and presidential elections in 2019, and that both processes be seen as credible by the Afghan electorate.

12. The National Unity Government, established by a political agreement in 2014 after the election results were contested, continues to be under strain. Security and political developments, such as the mass casualty terror attack of 31 May 2017 and subsequent violent clashes between protesters and security forces, exacerbate the friction among the political elites and fuel popular discontent. The attack also led to a significant reduction in the presence of international diplomatic and development actors. Popular discontent has increasingly been demonstrated through large-scale street protests that risk provoking further instability. While the President and the

Chief Executive have stated their commitment to the National Unity Government, political posturing and factional allegiances, often along ethnic lines, have increased ahead of the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections.

13. The negotiation and partial implementation of a peace agreement between the Government of Afghanistan and Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin, led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who had previously violently contested the State, was a signal achievement. While the re-emergence of Mr. Hekmatyar on the political scene has generated concern among some Afghan political actors, as well as civil society representatives, including with regard to human rights and ethnic aspects, the agreement demonstrated the ability of Afghan leaders to make the hard choices that peace requires.

14. The overall security situation has deteriorated over the past few years, as the Taliban have been able to influence and, to some extent, control ever larger parts of the country. While some representatives of the Taliban may recognize the need for a political settlement, others feel that they have the upper hand militarily. The situation has been described as an eroding stalemate in which the Taliban have increased the territory they are able to contest and, in some areas, have begun to consolidate their hold. The emergence of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant — Khorasan Province, although still relatively small in numbers, has added a new, dangerous dimension to an already complex situation. Multiple terror groups, many with regional and international ambitions and often of foreign origin, work in fluid nexuses with local and transnational criminal networks spreading extremism, narcotics, weapons and funding of terror across borders. Opiate production in 2016 is estimated to have generated over \$3 billion, much of which supports the insurgency.

15. The Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, with the support of advisers from the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission, currently hold major population centres but have ceded much ground to the Taliban in rural areas. Attrition rates within the national defence forces are unsustainably high, and morale is suffering. A four-year plan currently envisaged by the national defence forces and the Resolute Support Mission is designed to reverse the situation by enabling the national defence forces to be capable of sustaining themselves to initiate decisive counteroffensives in the next two years. This will require the continued support of the international community and the strong will of the Government.

16. The conflict exerts an unacceptable toll on Afghans, particularly civilians. In 2016, UNAMA documented over 11,000 civilian casualties (3,498 deaths), a record number compared to previous years, and an increase in child casualties by 24 per cent. With over 6,000 killed and 15,000 wounded, 2016 became the worst year for Afghan security forces, and the Taliban are likely to have suffered similarly high casualties. Around 650,000 people were internally displaced by the conflict in 2016, while more than 620,000 refugees and undocumented individuals returned from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. So far in 2017, fighting in many parts of the country has further intensified, with persisting record high levels of civilian casualties, especially among women and children, and significant displacement.

17. Peace negotiations between the Government and the armed opposition, including direct peace talks with the Taliban, are the only alternative for ending the drawn-out bloody armed conflict in Afghanistan. Earlier in 2017, the President presented his vision for peace to international donors in Kabul and, on 6 June, the Government convened the Kabul process conference on peace and security cooperation to bring under its leadership the different regional and international initiatives.

18. Yet the international consensus on Afghanistan that was a key factor behind early successes is fraying. The Kabul conference represents the Government's resolve to gather the existing multiple parallel peace initiatives under Afghan leadership. Nonetheless, the dynamic in the region needs to improve. Despite numerous public pronouncements on the need for regional cooperation, actors from the region are engaged in Afghanistan on behalf of their particular interests rather than making the compromises necessary to engage on behalf of the common regional interest in stability.

19. A shift towards a peace process through negotiations calls for a parallel adjustment of the role of UNAMA — and the wider United Nations system — from supporting a post-Bonn, post-conflict peacebuilding agenda towards supporting an Afghan-owned peace process that must eventually include direct negotiations with the Taliban.

20. Among the most consistent findings of the strategic review from interlocutors was the recognition of the added value of the United Nations as an impartial actor, and in particular the convening power of UNAMA and its access to all political stakeholders. In the past, this has been particularly useful in, for example, mediating electoral disputes, reporting and engaging parties to the conflict on protection issues and human rights abuses, and promoting the rule of law and international norms. Between the time of reporting and 2020, it is likely that UNAMA will be called upon to act as an impartial mediator between various competing interests within the Government, between the Government and its armed opposition and within the region.

IV. Strategic priorities: the primacy of peace

21. In line with the principle of Afghan sovereignty and the overarching goal of the United Nations to enable a stable and prosperous Afghanistan, the strategic priorities of a special political mission and of the wider United Nations system in Afghanistan should be:

(a) To work with all actors to promote cohesion within the Government and support the development of institutions that, among other things, are able to mediate political differences;

(b) To support all efforts to create conditions in which a political settlement can be reached to end the conflict, including by maintaining contacts with all parties to the conflict;

(c) To support, in alignment with the Government's priorities, endorsed by donors at the conference held in Brussels in 2016, the provision of essential services to the Afghan population and to work to create economic and social conditions that can lead to self-reliance and sustain an eventual negotiated peace.

22. In its pursuit of those priorities, the United Nations should draw on its normative role and use its convening powers to create consensus on political and constitutional arrangements that protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Afghans, and promote the accountability and inclusiveness of the institutions of Afghanistan. The emphasis on peace and conflict prevention will require some changes in the Mission's configuration.

23. The strategic leadership role of my Special Representative for Afghanistan and Head of UNAMA across the political, human rights and development spheres is essential. In exercising overall leadership of the Mission, the Special Representative would continue to be responsible for overseeing the work of the two pillars,

political and developmental, and for ensuring their coherence in fulfilment of the strategic priorities proposed in the present report. The Special Representative will also report to me on how the resources of the Organization may best be used in fulfilment of the mandate with which he or she is entrusted. This will require a higher degree of alignment between and transparency from the wider United Nations system and governing bodies of system agencies, funds and programmes, as well as donors.

V. Reinforced political role

24. The strategic priorities identified will require that renewed prominence be given to supporting peace efforts in all of the Mission's substantive functions, in line with my emphasis on integrating conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding into the three pillars of the work of the United Nations. It will also necessitate an institutional structure that reinforces the Mission's political capacity and enables UNAMA, as well as the development and, to the extent possible while adhering to humanitarian principles, humanitarian activities of the United Nations to contribute comprehensively to peace efforts under the leadership of my Special Representative.

25. The political pillar would be headed by a Deputy Special Representative, who would be the Special Representative's principle adviser on political issues. The Deputy Special Representative (Political) would, in consultation with and under the direct guidance of the Special Representative, oversee the varied activities within the pillar. The main functions, some of which are currently disbursed throughout the Mission, that need to be consolidated within the political pillar are: (a) support for internal political stability; (b) support for credible elections in 2018 and 2019; (c) support for an eventual Afghan-owned peace process and reconciliation; and (d) an improvement in regional cooperation around Afghanistan with the objective of securing peace in Afghanistan. All of those functions bear directly on the achievement of the first two strategic priorities and indirectly on the achievement of the third priority.

26. With regard to internal political stability, UNAMA should enhance its efforts to address internal political fragmentation that threatens the stability of the Government, contributes to deepening political and ethnic fault lines and makes the consensus required for peace negotiations more difficult to achieve. To ensure the representativeness and sustainability of the institutions of Afghanistan, UNAMA should pay particular attention to the participation of women and youth in political processes. It should promote a stable and inclusive political environment with respect for the rule of law and constitutional norms and conduct broad outreach to diverse stakeholders, with a focus on building support for the Government's reform agenda and the credibility of government institutions and on improving transparency and accountability.

27. The Mission should, at the request of the Government, support the organization of credible, widely acceptable elections, including efforts to strengthen the sustainability, integrity and inclusiveness of the electoral process. A key component of this would be the provision of capacity-building support and technical advice to the electoral management bodies, in particular, the Independent Election Commission and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission, in the discharge of their independent roles. The Mission should also support the electoral bodies in their outreach activities as they seek to build political consensus and understanding around an improved electoral process. Such efforts require strong coherence across United Nations entities and the wider international community.

Currently, United Nations support for elections — the date for holding parliamentary and district council elections was recently set for 7 July 2018 — is provided through an electoral support team that comprises elements from UNAMA and the United Nations Development Programme. I endorse this integrated approach, which brings together political and technical elements and might include other United Nations agencies; implementation of the programme would continue to be funded entirely through donor support.

28. A peace process in Afghanistan, including negotiations with the Taliban, must be Afghan-owned; nonetheless, the region and the broader international community also have a stake and influence in helping to create the conditions for peace. At the Kabul process conference of 6 June, the President confirmed that a “strengthened UNAMA would be a key counterpart in this process”. Likewise, international and national stakeholders have indicated that the involvement of an impartial actor, such as the United Nations, will be needed to lend credibility and legitimacy to any such process. If requested, UNAMA should therefore support an Afghan-led process through advice on mediation, confidence-building measures, transitional justice, the protection of human rights and civilians, the promotion of international values and norms and the engagement of the armed opposition. Public engagement would also be a key aspect of this, and national dialogue initiatives, such as the Afghan People’s Dialogue on Peace, will be important tools on which to build in efforts to ensure that the views of the traditionally marginalized, including residents of rural and remote areas, women and youth, are fed into the high-level political process.

29. As part of its efforts to create an environment conducive to a peace process, UNAMA should continue to support the work and the capacity of the High Peace Council as it reorients its activities towards nationwide consensus-building. This could conceivably include the training of High Peace Council staff and members, assistance with process design and the provision of political and technical expertise in the implementation of peace agreements. The Mission could also work to strengthen the Government’s engagement with civil society, community leaders, women’s groups and religious elders in peacebuilding activities. Concurrently, the Mission could assist local partners in promoting a whole-of-Government approach to peace. Finally, the UNAMA field offices could scale up their work at the local level by fostering social cohesion in preparation for a high-level peace process, building on the knowledge gained from ongoing peace initiatives. This will require the retention of a broad field presence (see sect. VIII. below), with improved integration of field-level staff into the priority activities of the Mission. In the medium term, UNAMA could focus on promoting mediation efforts if requested by the Government.

30. With regard to regional cooperation and dialogue, an Afghan peace process calls for greater international support and coherence than currently exists. To bring this about would suggest an increased role for the United Nations to support and promote bilateral and multilateral cooperation. It is recommended that UNAMA, in close cooperation with the Government, increase its support for regional dialogue and regional initiatives, as appropriate, in particular the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan and the Kabul process for peace and security cooperation. Consistent with the Government’s priorities, this would entail renewed efforts, including greater collaboration with the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, to promote regional coherence on counter-terrorism while maintaining an overall focus on building support for peace negotiations. The Mission would also rely more on its two liaison offices in the Islamic Republic of Iran and in Pakistan.

31. Apart from these established regional processes, UNAMA should endeavour to use its convening capacity to reconsolidate the regional consensus on Afghanistan. This process should go hand in hand with the increased focus of UNAMA on promoting peace. The Government's peace and reconciliation strategy should provide an opportunity for building trust between Afghanistan and its neighbours and create space for enhanced cooperation at the regional level.
32. In line with the demand for greater synergies and more effective use of United Nations resources, UNAMA should, as mentioned above, work more closely with the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, located in Ashgabat. By virtue of its regional mandate, the Regional Centre is positioned to convene the five Central Asian countries, along with relevant regional organizations and other key stakeholders, to discuss and encourage a more coherent regional approach and to support an eventual peace process.
33. In support of the three strategic priorities outlined earlier, the Political Affairs Division of UNAMA may require specialized capacity in areas such as mediation, reconciliation, rule of law (constitution), civil society outreach, transitional justice issues and armed groups/security. Where relevant, the political pillar will draw on broader United Nations expertise with regard to, among other things, mediation, reconciliation, transitional justice, counter-terrorism and sanctions regimes. Additional support could be supplemented by the more proactive use of existing standby mechanisms, such as the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers of the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, and by drawing on the expertise of the wider United Nations system.
34. Underlying these functions is the need for a robust analytical capacity within the Mission. Conflict prevention, conflict management and the design and implementation of effective peace strategies all depend on an accurate and timely analysis of the evolving tensions and the main actors in the conflict, as well as an understanding of their positions and influencing factors. This includes a cross-cutting understanding of the political economy that has emerged around the conflict, which makes its resolution more difficult. In this context, I recommend that the integrated analytical capacity, with its cross-cutting approach, be incorporated into the political pillar.
35. Owing to the reduced international military presence and the change of its role to advising, training and assisting, I recommend the abolishment of the Military Advisory Unit. One post of Senior Military Adviser should be retained within the Political Affairs Division to liaise with international military forces, contribute to the integrated analysis of the Division and the Mission as a whole and provide strategic-level advice on military affairs to the Mission leadership. I also recommend that the Police Advisory Unit and the Rule of Law Unit be abolished. A smaller rule of law capacity should be located in the Political Affairs Division to advise on normative issues, including on justice and anti-corruption measures.
36. A suggestion raised by some senior Afghan officials and international interlocutors and contested by others in the course of the strategic review was the potential for a high-level United Nations regional envoy. I believe that the time and conditions are not currently assessed to be ripe for this initiative. Rising demands on my Special Representative in Kabul relating to internal politics and electoral developments could foreshadow such a division of labour at a later stage.

VI. United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan and the United Nations country team: implementing development for peace

37. The third strategic priority is critical to promoting and sustaining the political efforts calibrated to securing peace. It entails ensuring the coherence of support in alignment with the Government's priorities and promoting the development of the underpinning structures necessary for long-term socioeconomic development in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

38. The President of Afghanistan has expressed concern regarding the work of the United Nations agencies and the need for better alignment with Government priorities. That concern is shared among other Afghan interlocutors. They have also stressed the need to reduce what they view as high transaction costs, improve transparency, strengthen the focus on building national capacity and reduce the number of interlocutors for the Government. Other Government representatives, in particular those from line ministries with core agreements with agencies, have spoken highly of the work of different agencies. Furthermore, a number of international donors have pointed out that United Nations agencies remain an important and trusted vehicle for development cooperation. My recommendation is therefore that the Mission's functions to coordinate international development work and to promote increased coherence need to be more focused on effective delivery in alignment with the national priorities endorsed by donors at the conference held in Brussels in 2016, as described below.

39. The second pillar would be headed by a Deputy Special Representative/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator who, in consultation with and under the direction of my Special Representative, is responsible for the work of the pillar and for leading and overseeing the United Nations country team. The incumbent would be responsible for ensuring United Nations delivery against the third strategic priority. In this regard, it is recommended that the Deputy Special Representative/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator has delegated responsibility to be the primary interlocutor and focal point with the Government and international donors on behalf of the country team and separately, in his or her capacity as Humanitarian Coordinator, the humanitarian community. The implementation of this recommendation, however, will depend on the commitment of the United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes, their governing boards and donors.

40. Instead of engaging in a limited number of programmatic activities, which included a now completed donor-funded project on women in community policing, the pillar would focus on strategic coordination. The main functions that need to be consolidated within the second pillar are the continued and strengthened ability to coordinate the international community's civilian efforts in Afghanistan, including the promotion of more coherent support for the Government's priorities, and the leadership of the United Nations country team, all while maintaining principled humanitarian action where people are in need. Both of these functions bear directly on the achievement of the third strategic priority and indirectly on the achievement of the first and second priorities.

41. Interlocutors of the strategic review team valued the role of UNAMA in coordinating international assistance, including strengthened donor coordination. With the enhancement of the responsibilities of the Deputy Special Representative/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, UNAMA should have the means by which to contribute more effectively in its role as the Co-Chair of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board.

42. With the aim of a focused approach for development to ensure maximum impact and coherence, United Nations development activities need to be aligned closely with the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework while reflecting the global objectives of the United Nations, in particular the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2016, United Nations agencies spent \$1.3 billion in Afghanistan, including both development and humanitarian funding. Over 90 per cent of the funding was in six thematic areas (agriculture, education, health, return and reintegration, rule of law, and the normative functions) carried out by various agencies. This differs somewhat, however, from the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, which was formulated prior to the establishment of the current Government and is based on five pillars: equitable economic development, basic social services, social equity and human capital, justice and the rule of law, and accountable governance.

43. To ensure a system-wide response to national priorities, in line with my report on the repositioning of the United Nations development system (2017), the United Nations Development Assistance Framework is being revised in consultation with the Government with a view to it being endorsed by the Government. It is envisaged that each thematic area will have a lead agency to coordinate with others having clearly defined responsibilities and contributing in accordance with respective outcomes. Agencies should increasingly consider joint programmes as a preferred delivery option. Such an approach could significantly reduce parallel programme implementation mechanisms as a means to strengthen national capacities and reduce transaction costs. It could also help to ensure better synergy between development and humanitarian activities in Afghanistan while fully respecting humanitarian space and principles and the responsibilities of the Humanitarian Coordinator.

44. To strengthen strategic coordination, the possible merits of supporting donor coordination efforts with peacebuilding expertise could be further examined. Operating in close cooperation with the political pillar and the human rights component, such efforts could, among other things, include advice on and support for suitable peacebuilding approaches across United Nations programming at the national and subnational levels, with a particular focus on alignment, particularly in support of an eventual future peace agreement. Such a peacebuilding component could also enhance the Mission's capacity to support the Joint Monitoring and Coordination Board.

45. It is also recommended that the Governance Unit, with its presences in Kabul and field offices, be discontinued. The Government's efforts to promote effective and accountable subnational governance may benefit from normative advice from a small group of dedicated experts at UNAMA headquarters (second pillar). Even without dedicated field staff, these few experts would still be informed by the reporting from the Mission's field offices.

46. While the Deputy Special Representative/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and the United Nations country team would be mutually accountable for performance and for a shared contribution to Afghanistan's priorities, respective United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes would remain responsible for the implementation of programme components and be accountable to their respective agency heads and to respective donors. Nonetheless, the country team will be expected to demonstrate to the Government how, as a whole, it has contributed to the economic and social progress of Afghanistan, including by being able to describe how funding has been spent on a sectoral and geographical basis.

47. It is recognized that the coordination of United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes is challenged by the fact that each of these entities has its own line of authority, budget and timeline. Furthermore, agencies rely on donor funding for

their activities and are often encouraged to react to donor priorities, which may not always be fully aligned with the priorities articulated in the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework. In this regard, more cohesion between this pillar's constituent parts, in particular, robust donor coordination and the Resident Coordinator's team, could enable synergies (including donor mobilization) and alignment with national priorities. In this regard, I welcome the recent commitment of the President to periodically participate in meetings of the United Nations country team.

VII. Human rights: impartiality and credibility

48. The UNAMA Human Rights Unit represents the third pillar of the United Nations system. Its reporting in particular has been a major element of the Mission's overall credibility as an impartial actor in Afghanistan. Consistent and high-quality unbiased reporting and engagement with the parties to the conflict has helped to establish UNAMA as an impartial interlocutor. Dialogue with armed elements, notably the Taliban, on the protection of civilians has proven valuable, will remain important in the future and may provide entry points for a more substantive political negotiation. Humanitarian dialogue and negotiations on access for humanitarian actors will also continue to be important going forward. It is essential, therefore, that the Human Rights Unit continue to prioritize its monitoring, reporting and advocacy on the protection of civilians in armed conflict; the protection of children affected by armed conflict; the promotion of gender equality and the elimination of violence against women and conflict-related sexual violence; and the prevention of torture. The Unit also has responsibilities to enhance the integration of human rights in United Nations country team/humanitarian country team programming, including compliance with the United Nations human rights due diligence policy.

49. At the same time, in line with the Government's priorities, UNAMA should expand its efforts to build the capacity of national institutions, in particular the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, and promote the institutionalization of human rights protection within the country's security entities. UNAMA should also strengthen its engagement with Afghan and other institutions to follow up on recommendations of its human rights reporting. This would not entail additional resources, but rather a recalibration within the Human Rights Unit.

50. I intend to move the post of Senior Gender Adviser from the Human Rights Unit to the Office of my Special Representative, consistent with Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) on women, peace and security as well as the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations. This structure, which would bring UNAMA in line with special political missions worldwide, would enable the Senior Gender Adviser to more effectively provide strategic and political advice to the Mission's leaders and across units as they work to promote the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and political processes and improve the representation of women in governance structures. Mission-wide, there is a need to further build capacity on gender mainstreaming among staff so that the efforts of the Senior Gender Adviser are effectively supported by gender expertise embedded in all functional units.

VIII. Field presence of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

51. UNAMA currently has six regional offices (covering several provinces) and six provincial offices (covering certain provinces that are deemed to be of particular

strategic importance). The UNAMA field presence is one of the most visible manifestations of the Organization's lasting commitment to and engagement in supporting Afghans all over the country. The offices conduct outreach throughout the country, support mandate implementation and provide reporting to the Mission's headquarters. The strategic review team found that international donors and partners strongly supported the work of the offices, as did subnational stakeholders, while the President was more sceptical of their benefits, particularly the Mission's engagement in promoting subnational governance.

52. There are clear benefits to retaining a broad presence throughout the country, balanced with cost and security factors. With the general drawdown of the international presence having begun in 2014, local-level interlocutors, from governors to community members, have expressed on numerous occasions the profound hope that UNAMA stays; the United Nations presence is the last indication to many of the continuous international commitment to Afghanistan. This factor is particularly relevant in areas dominated by ethnic minorities, where the United Nations is often the only international organization present and is seen as a means of transmitting concerns to a central Government sometimes perceived as distant or indifferent. It is also relevant at this time, when the Government's own reach over the national territory is uneven and contested.

53. Local-level interlocutors also referred to the mediation support role that UNAMA plays in the field through its local peace initiatives, which simply cannot be implemented from afar. Moreover, UNAMA is able to direct the attention of local leaders to areas that they may otherwise overlook and is uniquely placed to act as a connector between local communities/authorities and the relevant ministries in Kabul. This is an important but invisible effort that has a real impact, even if it is difficult to quantify.

54. As areas are cleared of insurgents, or if access increases as the result of either a convincing peace process or local-level ceasefires, there will be a need to support a return to normality. UNAMA has an important role in making such an effort as effective as possible. This also cannot be done from far away, and addresses the need for greater co-location with United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes.

55. Taking into account outreach, cost and potential security implications, the strategic review team considered a number of scenarios, taking into account effectiveness, cost efficiencies and security considerations. On the basis of those criteria, I recommend that UNAMA close one provincial office (Farah Province); outreach to the province would, if conditions permit, be conducted from the regional office in Herat. In addition, United Nations Headquarters and the Mission will explore the feasibility of further nationalizing functions in the remaining five provincial offices without compromising the implementation of the mandate or the safety of staff. While the nationalization of provincial offices could potentially facilitate co-location with other United Nations system agencies, certain functions, such as political and human rights monitoring, as well as information and communications technology, may prove too sensitive. Lastly, it is recommended that the Mission assess the option of reducing international posts in the six regional offices over the coming years by forming smaller, multidisciplinary teams whose staff individually possess broad skill sets, with the exception of human rights staff, who need to maintain a distinct operational independence.

56. Should Member States express determination for an immediate, larger reduction of the UNAMA field presence, several observations and considerations apply. First, a significant reduction of offices would need to take place in phases, not least because of the administrative and logistical burden on the Mission, but

mainly because of the perception and related messaging required. The closure of several offices simultaneously would likely be interpreted as a reduction in the international community's commitment to Afghanistan. Due consideration should also be given to the political environment, particularly the upcoming 2018-2019 election cycle, in the timing of this decision. It would also be important to ensure that the remaining UNAMA presence covers all regions where the different ethnic communities in Afghanistan are represented for as long as security allows. Second, the decision to close offices is essentially irrevocable. Third, there would be a one-time cost for closing the offices, given contract termination and, as applicable, severance allowances, the need for transport of reusable assets and other costs. Expected cost savings from the closure of offices would likely not be immediate.

IX. Mission support and security

57. The provision of adequate security remains a precondition for the United Nations presence in Afghanistan. The security situation in Afghanistan remains difficult and poses corresponding operational challenges for the United Nations in delivering mandated tasks and activities. Most recently, several United Nations compounds in Kabul were damaged by the suicide truck bombing of 31 May 2017 that affected the international community. A number of embassies were forced to withdraw staff owing to extensive damage to their facilities. To date, UNAMA has not had to reduce its staffing numbers and continues to function as before. The evolving threat picture, however, will likely require further adjustments to the security posture of the United Nations, including the strengthening of facilities against the possibility of an acutely increased magnitude of explosives being employed by insurgents.

58. The security arrangements required to ensure the adequate delivery of mandated tasks and activities impose significant costs. In 2017, 24 per cent of the UNAMA budget was allocated to security-related costs. Therefore, opportunities to increase synergies, share costs and perform cost recovery, including with United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes, need to be further explored. Such opportunities include the use of joint services, such as guard forces, and the sharing of resources, including through greater co-location. Some synergies are already being achieved in the areas of security training, the operations centre, the Air Terminal Unit at Kabul airport and countrywide radio rooms. The establishment of joint medical services should also be envisaged as a priority to ensure uniform and more rationalized medical care for all United Nations staff.

59. UNAMA has initiated a number of cost-saving measures, including a reconfiguration of air assets and greater integration with the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service to avoid duplication; the streamlining of support services, including medical and ground transportation services; and improved cost recovery for services provided to United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes. Additional opportunities for co-location between UNAMA and the United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes need to be explored for financial and security reasons.

X. Conclusion

60. I welcomed the opportunity provided by the request of the Security Council for a strategic review of UNAMA. For more than 15 years, the effort to create a stable and prosperous Afghanistan has been a major goal of the international community, for which huge efforts and resources have been provided and in which

the United Nations has played a vital role. That role, however, has had to change over time as the context has evolved. As the strategic review suggests, the time has come again for a change in how the United Nations operates in Afghanistan.

61. Afghanistan is once again in a period of increasing insecurity and fragility. Beyond the immediate suffering being inflicted upon the Afghan people, the armed conflict is impeding efforts to bring the political and economic progress that will ultimately ensure stability. This situation cannot continue indefinitely; the Afghan people need a future to look forward to. Without a peace process, the sustainability and viability of all of our joint efforts to bring stability and prosperity to Afghanistan will be called into question.

62. I recommend that the findings of the strategic review as set out in the present report be incorporated into the next mandate of UNAMA. I would also like to express my gratitude to my Special Representative for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, for leading the strategic review and to my Special Representative for Afghanistan and Head of UNAMA, Tadamichi Yamamoto, for his leadership of the Mission, as well as all United Nations personnel in Afghanistan for their support for and participation in the strategic review. I would also like to thank all of those interlocutors, especially Afghan counterparts, who generously provided their views on the role of UNAMA for the purposes of the review. My recommendations for the future focus and configuration of the Mission and related United Nations entities take into account the view expressed by many interlocutors of the important role of UNAMA in supporting the progress of Afghanistan towards peace, stability and prosperity, despite inevitable obstacles. Going forward, the strengthening of the strategic partnership between the Government and UNAMA, in particular, will be key to ensuring the effective implementation of the international community's support for lasting peace and development in Afghanistan.